



## HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

### **Testimony :: Fred Zeidman**

Chairman - U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

LET ME BEGIN TODAY BY THANKING THE CHAIRMAN AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING, AND FOR INVITING ME TO TESTIFY. AS CHAIR OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, I PLEDGE THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THE COMMISSION TO FIGHT ANTISEMITISM AND TO WARN OF THE DANGERS IT PRESENTS.

IT WAS MY HONOR TO REPRESENT THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM AS PART OF THE AMERICAN DELEGATION AT THE BERLIN CONFERENCE. I HAVE TO ADMIT, WHEN I WENT TO BERLIN I QUESTIONED HOW MUCH COULD REALLY BE ACCOMPLISHED. I LEFT BERLIN, HOWEVER, ENCOURAGED AND OPTIMISTIC THAT THE CONFERENCE WILL LEAD TO REAL ACTION AND REAL PROGRESS.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RESOLUTE LEADERSHIP OF MAYOR KOCH WHO LED OUR DELEGATION. WE WERE ALSO ENORMOUSLY FORTUNATE TO HAVE SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN POWELL JOIN US AT THE CONFERENCE. SECRETARY POWELL'S CRITICAL ROLE IN THE SUCCESS OF THE CONFERENCE CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. HIS OPENING REMARKS SET THE TONE FOR THE ENTIRE MEETING WHEN HE DECLARED, "WE MUST NOT PERMIT ANTI-SEMITIC CRIMES TO BE SHRUGGED OFF AS INEVITABLE SIDE EFFECTS OF INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICTS. POLITICAL DISAGREEMENTS DO NOT JUSTIFY PHYSICAL ASSAULTS AGAINST JEWS IN OUR STREETS, THE DESTRUCTION OF JEWISH SCHOOLS OR THE DESECRATION OF JEWISH SYNAGOGUES AND CEMETERIES. THERE IS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR ANTISEMITISM."

I AM HOPEFUL THAT THE NATIONS OF THE OSCE TOOK SECRETARY POWELL'S WORDS TO HEART AND HAVE FINALLY BEGUN TO CONFRONT THE REALITY OF ANTISEMITISM. TO BE TRULY SUCCESSFUL, THIS CONFERENCE MUST PRODUCE ACTION, NOT JUST TALK. THE BERLIN DECLARATION IS A POSITIVE FIRST STEP BECAUSE IT NOT ONLY ROUNDLY CONDEMNS ANTISEMITISM, BUT BECAUSE IT PRESCRIBES SPECIFIC, CONCRETE ACTIONS FOR MEMBER NATIONS TO ADOPT

IN ORDER TO COMBAT THE SICKNESS OF ANTISEMITISM.

AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF AN INSTITUTION WHOSE CENTRAL MISSION IS ABOUT THE DANGEROUS POTENTIAL OF HATRED, I AM PARTICULARLY HEARTENED BY THE INCREASED EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION THAT HAS COME OUT OF THE CONFERENCE. EDUCATING NEW GENERATIONS ABOUT THE EVILS OF ANTISEMITISM IS ESSENTIAL, BUT, AND LET ME BE CLEAR HERE, IT WILL NOT BE COMPLETE UNLESS IT INCLUDES A FULL, FRANK AND ACCURATE DISCUSSION OF THE HOLOCAUST.

AS YOU KNOW, CENTURIES OF EUROPEAN ANTISEMITISM, IN VARIOUS FORMS, EVENTUALLY CULMINATED IN THE MASS MURDER OF EUROPE'S JEWS DURING WORLD WAR II. NAZISM FLOURISHED IN GERMANY AND ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE FOR MANY REASONS, BUT UNDERSTANDING THE HOLOCAUST – THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE PERPETRATORS AND THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE BYSTANDERS – REQUIRES AN UNDERSTANDING OF ANTISEMITISM, HOW IT EVOLVED OVER TIME, AND THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE IT HAS PLAYED THROUGHOUT EUROPEAN HISTORY.

AS THE HELSINKI COMMISSION CORRECTLY POINTS OUT, ALL OSCE MEMBER STATES, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES, HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ENSURE “FULL COMPLIANCE WITH OSCE COMMITMENTS...” IN ORDER TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM. LET ME TAKE A MOMENT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT WE DO AT THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM TO TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF HATRED AND INDIFFERENCE. WE ARE ALREADY VERY INVOLVED IN IMPROVING HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AND REMEMBRANCE IN EUROPE THROUGH OUR LEADING ROLE IN THE TASK FORCE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.

JUST THIS PAST WEEK IN ROME, THE TASK FORCE MET AND ADDRESSED THE PRESSING ISSUE OF HOW TO FOLLOW-UP THE BERLIN ANTISEMITISM CONFERENCE. THE TASK FORCE HAS CLEARLY SEIZED THE URGENCY OF ENCOURAGING AND ASSISTING ITS MEMBER—AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBER—NATIONS TO DEVELOP PRACTICAL EDUCATION-RELATED PROGRAMS TO COMBAT RISING THREATS OF ANTISEMITISM, ESPECIALLY IN EUROPE.

AT ITS ROME MEETING, TWO NEW MEMBERS WERE ADMITTED TO THE TASK FORCE—DENMARK AND LATVIA—AND TWO OTHERS—BELGIUM AND SWITZERLAND—FORMALLY APPLIED FOR MEMBERSHIP. EIGHTEEN COUNTRIES NOW BELONG TO THIS VERY EFFECTIVE, VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION. TO BECOME A MEMBER, EVERY PROSPECT MUST COMMIT ITS NATION TO ADHERE TO THE STOCKHOLM DECLARATION.

THE MUSEUM'S REPRESENTATIVES—WITH THE SPECIAL ENVOY FOR

HOLOCAUST ISSUES, AMBASSADOR EDWARD O'DONNELL AND HIS TEAM—DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS AND OTHER APPROACHES TO PLACE THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS LESSONS IN THE MAINSTREAM OF TEACHER TRAINING AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, WE ARE ASSISTING CROATIA, ROMANIA, HUNGARY, THE BALTIC STATES, SLOVAKIA AND OTHERS TO LOOK AT THEIR NATIONAL HISTORIES HONESTLY AND TRAIN THEIR EDUCATORS ABOUT THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOLOCAUST AND ANTISEMITISM.

THIS SUMMER, 28 TEACHERS FROM EIGHT COUNTRIES IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE WILL PARTICIPATE IN TEACHER TRAINING SEMINARS AT HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTERS THROUGHOUT THE U.S. FOLLOWING THE WEEK-LONG SEMINAR, THE TEACHERS WILL VISIT THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM IN WASHINGTON AND MEET WITH OUR EDUCATORS, WHO WILL THEN PROVIDE MATERIAL FOR THEIR CLASSROOMS, AND ALSO WILL GUIDE THEM THROUGH THE EXTENSIVE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE ON THE MUSEUM'S WEBSITE.

NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR, THIS TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM HAS A DEFINITE MULTIPLIER EFFECT IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF THE NEW DEMOCRACIES OF EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE. THE MUSEUM COORDINATES THIS PROJECT, WITH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S. EMBASSIES IN THE TEACHERS' HOME COUNTRIES, AS WELL AS FROM THE CLAIMS CONFERENCE, AND THE ASSOCIATION OF HOLOCAUST ORGANIZATIONS HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTERS. THIS PROJECT HAS SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT AND IS GROWING EACH YEAR.

WE ALL KNOW, OF COURSE, THAT THE WORK OF LEARNING FROM HOLOCAUST HISTORY AND CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM IS NOT ONLY A EUROPEAN ISSUE. THAT'S WHY THE MUSEUM'S WORK IS SO CRITICAL IN OUR OWN COUNTRY, AND WHY IT WILL BECOME EVEN MORE SO IN THE FUTURE – I BELIEVE NO INSTITUTION TEACHES ABOUT THE DANGERS OF UNCHECKED ANTISEMITISM AS POWERFULLY AS THE MUSEUM DOES. FOR INSTANCE, A PUBLIC PROGRAM AT THE MUSEUM RECENTLY FEATURED SCHOLARS FROM CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT, AND JEWISH TRADITIONS WHO EXPLORED THE ROLE ANTISEMITISM PLAYED IN GERMAN CHURCHES, AND HOW IT CONTRIBUTED TO THE HOLOCAUST.

WE EDUCATE THE GENERAL PUBLIC ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS, OUR WEBSITE, WHICH HOSTS OVER 5 MILLION VISITORS PER YEAR, AS WELL AS TEACHER TRAINING AND REGIONAL PROGRAMMING. WE ARE ENSURING THAT THE FIELD OF HOLOCAUST SCHOLARSHIP REMAINS VIBRANT AND HEALTHY. WE ARE INTENSIFYING OUR EFFORTS TO RESCUE THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF THE HOLOCAUST IN THIS VANISHING WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY.

IN ADDITION, THROUGH A VARIETY OF INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN WASHINGTON AND AROUND THE COUNTRY, WE'RE EXPANDING PROGRAMS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, CLERGY, THE MILITARY AND OTHERS WHO LEAD AND PROTECT OUR SOCIETY. WE BELIEVE WE MUST PROVIDE SPECIAL, IN-DEPTH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE IN POSITIONS OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP, FOR WHOM AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOLOCAUST CAN HELP SHAPE OUR WORLD. AND, THROUGH OUR COMMITTEE ON CONSCIENCE, WE ARE RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF CONTEMPORARY ACTS OR THREATS OF GENOCIDE. IN FACT, OUR COMMITTEE ON CONSCIENCE STAFF DIRECTOR HAS JUST RETURNED FROM TWO WEEKS IN CHAD TALKING TO SUDANESE REFUGEES WHO ESCAPED THE NEIGHBORING DARFUR REGION OF SUDAN WHERE INCREASING VIOLENCE IS THREATENING GENOCIDE.

THE SUCCESS OF THE MUSEUM IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FULL SUPPORT OF CONGRESS AND THE CURRENT AND FORMER ADMINISTRATIONS; AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, AN AMERICAN PUBLIC THAT PLACES GREAT VALUE ON INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. MARSHALLING SIMILAR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT EUROPE IS ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO PREVAIL OVER IGNORANCE AND HATRED.

IN CONCLUSION, LET ME IDENTIFY THREE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH HOLOCAUST EDUCATION STANDS. FIRST, HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IS ABOUT ACCURATELY UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY OF THIS TRAGIC PERIOD. THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS ENSURING THE DISSEMINATION OF REAL, ACCURATE AND RELEVANT INFORMATION IS MAKING THE HISTORICAL RECORD EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE IS ONE OF FAIRNESS IN APPROACHING THE HISTORY. ALL GROUPS STRUGGLE WITH APPROPRIATELY UNDERSTANDING HISTORY, YET, WE ALL KNOW THAT NO NATION BEARS AN UNBLEMISHED PAST. CERTAINLY, THIS IS AS TRUE OF OUR OWN COUNTRY AS IT IS OF MANY OTHERS; AND WE MAKE THAT CLEAR IN THE MUSEUM'S PERMANENT EXHIBITION. WE ARE HONEST ABOUT WHAT THE U.S. DID – AND DID NOT DO – DURING THE HOLOCAUST. IN OTHER WORDS, EACH NATION MUST FACE ITS OWN HISTORY HONESTLY.

FINALLY, INFORMATION MUST BE RELEVANT TO THE AUDIENCE. WHICH ELEMENTS OF HOLOCAUST HISTORY ACTUALLY PERTAIN TO EVENTS WE ARE ADDRESSING TODAY? OUR POLITICAL LEADERS ARE COMMITTED TO ACTION, AND THIS HEARING AND THE INTRODUCTION OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 425 ARE BOTH CONCRETE RESPONSES TO THAT DETERMINATION.

WE MAY PREFER TO BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD IS NOW ENLIGHTENED—THAT WE'VE ADVANCED TOO FAR, LEARNED TOO MANY LESSONS THAT HUMANITY HAS MATURED TOO MUCH. BUT I'M REMINDED OF WHAT PRESIDENT BUSH

SAID AFTER VISITING THE MUSEUM – “WHEN WE REMEMBER THE HOLOCAUST AND TO WHOM IT HAPPENED, WE MUST ALSO REMEMBER WHERE IT HAPPENED. IT DIDN’T HAPPEN IN SOME REMOTE, UNFAMILIAR PLACE. IT HAPPENED RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WESTERN WORLD ... MORAL DISCERNMENT, DECENCY, TOLERANCE – THESE CAN NEVER BE ASSUMED IN ANY TIME, OR IN ANY PLACE. THEY MUST ALWAYS BE TAUGHT.”

THE BERLIN CONFERENCE WAS A SIGNIFICANT MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. BUT IT MUST BE FOLLOWED BY ACTION, AND FOR MANY NATIONS THIS WILL BE DIFFICULT. I BELIEVE WE ARE ENGAGED IN AN ACT OF “TIKKUN OLAM,” HEBREW FOR REPAIRING THE WORLD. THIS IS IN THE BEST SPIRIT OF BOTH THE JEWISH TRADITION AND ALL OF HUMANITY’S GREATEST ASPIRATIONS. WE MUST FOCUS OUR ENERGIES AND ACTIONS AT HOME AND ABROAD TO CONFRONT HATRED BEFORE IT DAMAGES PEOPLE, PROPERTY AND CIVIL SOCIETY. WE MUST REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS WITH OUR FRIENDS IN EUROPE TO STOP ANY MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTISEMITISM. IT CAN BE DONE – IT MUST BE DONE FOR THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE.

ALONG AND WITH OUR PARTNERS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, WE ARE DOING OUR PART AT THE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM. WE ARE SETTING A STANDARD THAT STOPS HATRED BEFORE IT GAINS A FOOTHOLD IN OUR COMMUNITIES. OUR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION AND AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS SUPPORT THESE EFFORTS. THAT’S WHY I’M SO PROUD TO LEAD AMERICA’S NATIONAL MEMORIAL TO THE HOLOCAUST – THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM – AND PROUD TO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE BERLIN CONFERENCE.

THANK YOU.